

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 091400Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7900

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

REF: A) GABORONE 0624, BC) GABORONE 0609

C) GABORONE 0607

1. THE CHARGE TOOK THE OCCASION DURING A VISIT WITH PETER SCANLON, BRITISH HEAD OF CHANCERY, APRIL 7, TO DISCUSS THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER CLOSURE FOR BOTSWANA, IN PARTICULAR ANY NOTICEABLE CHANGES IN THE USE OF THE BOTSWANA LINK OF THE RHODESIA RAILWAYS. SCANLON SAID HIS IMPRESSION WAS THERE THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN RHODESIAN TRAFFIC ON THE LINK. HE RECALLED A CONVERSATION WITH A BRITISH JOURNALIST RECENTLY WHO HAD SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS IN RHODESIA EXAMINING THE PROBLEM OF THE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER CLOSURE. THE JOURNALIST REPORTED THAT THE BEITBRIDGE AREA HAS SEEN A GREAT INCREASE IN RAIL

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CONSTRUCTION AND APPEARS CAPABLE OF HANDLING MUCH LARVER LEVELS

OF TRAFFIC THAN HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN CONSIDERED POSSIBLE. BASED ON THE JOURNALIST'S JUDGEMENTS, SCANLON CONSIDERS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT THE BEITBRIDGE AREA COULD HANDLE NEARLY ALL OF RHODESIA'S RAIL TRAFFIC (UNLESS AND UNTIL DESTROYED BY A SABOTAGE EFFORT).

2. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION NORMAN HARDIE, RESIDENT MANAGER, ANGLO AMERICAN IN BOTSWANA (PARENT COMPANY FOR THE MORUPULE COLLIERY) TOLD THE CHARGE THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY THE MANAGER AT MORUPULE THAT WITHIN THE LAST MONTH ALL OF THE COAL CARS WERE WITHDRAWN TO RHODESIA OVER A WEEKEND. THE DISCOVERY WAS ONLY MADE ON THE FOLLOWING MONDAY WHEN THE CARS WERE TO HAVE BEEN FILLED.

3. SIMILARLY, THE BLS DESK OFFICER WHILE VISITING THE LOBATSE ABATTOIR WAS TOLD BY A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE BOTSWANA MEAT COMMISSION THAT ON A RECENT WEEKEND (POSSIBLY THE SAME ONE) ALL RHODESIAN CHILLER CARS WERE WITHDRAWN ON SHORT NOTICE.

4. COMMENT: THE INFORMATION IN PARA 1 INDICATES THAT RHODESIA IS DEVELOPING INCREASINGLY CAPABILITY OVER BEITBRIDGE LINK. THE RECENT INCIDENTS NOTED IN PARAS 2 AND 3 ARE ATTRIBUTED BY SOME TO RUMORS THAT BOTSWANA INTENDED TO CLOSE THE BORDER. IT APPEARS THAT MUCH OF THE ROLLING STOCK HAS SINCE RETURNED TO NORMAL USE IN BOTSWANA.

THOMSEN

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